



Daily News Bulletin

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84th Year

TOP NEWS IN BRIEF

Dead Sea Scrolls go to press

The publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls is nearly completed.

The last of the 38 volumes of scrolls and commentaries are in their final stages of preparation. One of the great finds of 20th-century archaeology, the scrolls portray Jewish thinking in the period 2,000 years ago that produced rabbinic Judaism.

One of the scrolls, containing the Hebrew song of thanksgiving, is being dedicated Thursday in New York in honor of the city's response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Dating from 250 B.C.E. to 70 C.E., the scrolls were found between 1947 and 1956 in the caves of Qumran in the West Bank.

Envoys may go to Middle East

The United States may send two envoys to the Middle East next week.

The visits by the diplomats, retired U.S. Marine Commander Anthony Zinni and the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, William Burns, would come after U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell delivers a Middle East policy speech Monday.

Zinni is expected to take over Israeli-Palestinian security dialogues that previously were handled by CIA Director George Tenet. The move is part of a renewed U.S. effort to reduce Israeli-Palestinian tension.

Palestinians riot after arrest

Thousands of Palestinians took to the streets after Palestinian police arrested a leading militant.

There were conflicting reports of whether Mohammed Tawalbe, 23, the top Islamic Jihad militant from the West Bank city of Jenin, was released shortly thereafter.

Tawalbe is considered responsible for 11 suicide bombings against Israel.

Israel stages raids into Gaza

One Palestinian reportedly was killed in an Israeli raid. Some 14 Palestinians also were reportedly injured in the brief raid Thursday into the Khan Yunis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip.

The raid came in response to repeated shootings from this area on Israeli settlements, the Israeli army said. Israel also raided a village near Bethlehem in the West Bank, arresting 10 suspected militants.

Peres speech lauded abroad, but more controversial at home

By Michael S. Arnold

NEW YORK (JTA) — American Jewish leaders say Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' address to the U.N. General Assembly this week will help consolidate a growing consensus in Israel on the need for an independent Palestinian state.

However, furious reaction from right-wing politicians at home cast doubt on how broad the supposed consensus really is.

Addressing the General Assembly on Thursday, Peres set forth a vision of an international community united in devotion to scientific progress that is starkly at odds with the barbarism of terrorist groups such as Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida.

Cutting to the core, however, leaders of American Jewish groups focused on Peres' strong support for the idea of a Palestinian state. Other world leaders, including President Bush and many Arab diplomats, made similar calls during their speeches at the assembly this week.

"Yesterday you would hardly find, for example, support for a Palestinian state," Peres said, while today "there is support for Palestinian independence, support for a Palestinian state.

"We do not want to dominate the Palestinians," he continued. "We want them to breathe freedom, to create a new economy, to maintain their tradition, to enjoy the highest level of education and provide real security to all parties."

American Jewish leaders lauded the speech.

David Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee and a veteran of Jewish diplomacy, called it "one of the most poetic and thoughtful speeches I've heard in a very long time."

Peres "touched all the right buttons," Harris said. "I only hope that the messages struck home."

The Anti-Defamation League's national director, Abraham Foxman, agreed.

Peres "articulated a consensus that exists in Israel on the issue of a Palestinian state, and even the consensus of the American Jewish community," Foxman said. "He articulated where we are and gave a pragmatic vision of where we would like to be."

Though Peres long has advocated a "two-state" solution, it was important for world leaders to hear such a message from an Israeli diplomat at the United Nations, according to Tom Smerling, Washington director of the Israel Policy Forum.

"To say this to the General Assembly is one more step toward the mainstreaming in Israel of the idea of a Palestinian state," Smerling said. "Israel always breaks taboos in small increments. All they are doing is acknowledging and confirming the obvious."

Just how obvious remains unclear, however.

In an apparent last-minute addition to his speech, Peres noted that his support for a Palestinian state is "not yet a formal policy of the government of Israel."

Indeed, Peres reportedly said he toned down a reference to the breadth of support in Israel for Palestinian statehood because of complaints from right-wing ministers that the government had never taken a formal position on the issue.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said last month that he, too, envisions an independent Palestinian state, but critics say the contours of the state Sharon wants are so limited as to render it meaningless. In any case, Sharon's remarks came before the assassination of an Israeli minister in mid-October, which set off a particularly bloody spiral of violence that has not yet been fully controlled.

Sharon on Thursday sought to disassociate himself from Peres' remarks, according to the Jerusalem Post.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz, however, reported that the two coordinated the speech before Peres left Israel last week, and that top aides worked out last-minute problems in a phone call Thursday.

Still, right-wing politicians in Israel were furious.

Tourism Minister Benny Elon said Sharon should consider firing Peres.

"I think a foreign minister should not say things in the name of the Israeli street as

MIDEAST FOCUS

Russia: We back Israeli security

Russia says it will not sell Iran weapons that threaten Israel.

Russian President Vladimir Putin made the pledge in a meeting this week with U.S. Jewish leaders, according to the Jerusalem Post.

Putin also told the Jewish leaders that Russia backs Israel's security, particularly because so many Russian-born Jews live there. The United States and Israel long have expressed concern about Russia's transfer of nuclear technology to Iran.

Mosque controversy resumes

A controversy over a mosque in Israel was reignited. Muslims in Nazareth began building the mosque again this week, but were halted by Israel.

Christians in the northern Israeli city oppose the construction because the mosque would be adjacent to the Basilica of the Annunciation, one of Christianity's holiest sites. Muslim leaders said they would resume building soon, even if they do not receive the necessary permits.

Israel to release prisoners

Israel said it would release 30 Palestinian prisoners during Ramadan.

The release of the prisoners is expected to come during the end of the Muslim holy month, which begins in mid-November. Israel often releases prisoners during Ramadan as a goodwill gesture. In addition, Israel said it would relax some travel restrictions during Ramadan.

Nine Israelis out on bail

The United States released on bail nine Israelis arrested after Sept. 11. Some 100 Israelis illegally in the United States have been arrested across the country as part of a crackdown on illegal foreign workers following the Sept. 11 terror attacks.



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he imagines it," but should stick to government guidelines, Elon said.

"He has no mandate to declare what he declared," agreed Dan Naveh, a minister without portfolio. It was "a serious mistake."

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is considered Sharon's most serious challenger for leadership of the Likud Party, told Israel's Channel One television that Peres speech rewarded the Palestinians for terrorism.

Peres "has a problem adjusting to reality," Netanyahu said, and is among a small minority of Israelis who still believe Arafat can be trusted with a state. "It is absurd to allow Arafat to set up a terrorist state in the heart of Israel," Netanyahu said.

In Washington, Smerling said Peres' vision "can give the Palestinians some inkling of hope that if they pay the price of truly clamping down on violence, there is something in it for them at the end of the day."

Despite his support for the Palestinians, Peres was adamant about Israel's need for security.

"As long as terror persists, Israel has no choice but to defend its people," he said. "The word terror does not describe an abstract dilemma for us, it refers to a reality of between 30 to 40 violent incidents every day shooting, bombing, ambushing, killing."

In addition, he appeared to give oblique backing to Israel's controversial policy of assassinating suspected Palestinian terrorists. Terror "is perpetrated by suicide bombers that have no respect for life their own or others," Peres said. "The only place they can be intercepted is at the point from which they depart."

Peres also called on the Palestinian Authority to exert control over terrorist groups it allows to operate from its territory but then ducks responsibility for attacks the groups carry out. "If you have one political authority and several armed groups, you can have neither democracy nor security," he said.

"The Palestinian Authority, which is a state in being, must establish one authority over all arms, all armies, all use of arms, not for the sake of Israel, but for the sake of peace, for the sake of their own destiny, so that bullets will not negate ballots." □

New group for child survivors of Shoah has European focus

By Magnus Bennett

PRAGUE (JTA) — A new pan-European organization will reach out to Jewish child survivors of the Holocaust who are not yet represented by other groups.

The European Association of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust, formed in Prague, will represent the interests of European child survivors in dealing with institutions such as the Claims Conference, and will encourage and coordinate events of mutual interest at a European level. The organization originally was conceived by members of Hidden Child-Praha — a Czech support group for people forced into hiding to escape the Nazis — during the annual conference of the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust, held here in 1999.

Other organizations representing Holocaust survivors — such as the Terezin Initiative — and Kindertransport survivors have expressed support for the new project.

Representatives from nine countries met to lay the foundations of the new association — Britain, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia.

The organization has the support of the U.S.-based World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust. The Europeans are keen to dismiss suggestions that the new association was set up because the World Federation had failed to represent the interests of European victims.

"We are not a breakaway group," said Vera Egermayer, spokesperson for Hidden Child-Praha. "On the contrary we have had a lot of support, both moral and practical, from the World Federation. There is complete cooperation. In fact, we will bring the World Federation new members because we have managed to ferret out individuals and groups they had not been able to reach."

For example, Egermayer said, the organization recently succeeded in reaching a Croatian group that had just been formed.

She said that while organizations at a local and national level had been around for the last decade, there was nothing on a regional level in Europe. □

JEWISH WORLD

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

Rabbi's trial was diversion for some, but Jews ponder the consequences

By Rachel Pomerance

NEW YORK (JTA) — The trial of Rabbi Fred Neulander, which ended in a mistrial this week, has served as fodder for hungry media outlets around the United States.

The former rabbi of M'Kor Shalom, one of the largest congregations in southern New Jersey, Neulander is accused of hiring a congregant to murder his wife in 1994 so he could carry on an affair with another congregant.

His tale has been packaged for the public by The New York Times and Court TV — not to mention People magazine and the "Today Show."

But while the trial was a curiosity for much of the U.S. population, some rabbinic leaders and Jewish thinkers are wondering how it could affect perceptions of a rabbinate already beset by two major sex scandals in the past year.

To be a rabbi is a "sacred calling" and the rabbi is "an exemplar of Jewish life, so I'm embarrassed when any rabbi engages in misconduct, especially in my movement," said Rabbi Eric Yoffie, president of the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the congregational arm of Reform Judaism.

It is still unclear whether Neulander is guilty of arranging the 1994 murder of his wife, Carol. It also is unknown whether he will be tried again, as prosecutors have vowed.

What is clear is that Neulander's behavior, and the publicity around his trial, does not cast a positive light on the rabbinate: Neulander has admitted to affairs with at least two women who came to him for counseling.

Since the Sept. 11 terror attacks, U.S. Jews appear to be looking even more toward their rabbis for moral and spiritual guidance.

According to a poll released this week during the United Jewish Communities' General Assembly, Jews have turned to synagogues for comfort and support during the turmoil since the terrorist attacks.

Yet rabbis never were meant to be put on a pedestal, according to Rabbi Steven Dworken, executive vice president of the Rabbinical Council of America, an umbrella organization for Orthodox rabbis. "A rabbi in Judaism has the same opportunities and obligations as any other person," he said. "Just like doctors and lawyers and Indian chiefs can do the wrong thing, so can rabbis."

Gary Mazo was associate rabbi of M'Kor Shalom at the time of the murder, and is the author of "And the Flame Did Not Consume Us," a book about the congregation's experience during the crisis. He said congregants have a basic expectation that their rabbi "operates on a moral and ethical plane."

One rabbinical leader said the case of Neulander, who resigned as M'Kor Shalom's rabbi in 1995, even could have a silver lining.

"To the extent that this case reminds us that rabbis, like the rest of us, are human, that's good for the rabbinate and good for the Jewish people," said Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, vice president of CLAL — The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. "Any time you create an artificial moral or ethical divide between so-called leaders and the people they supposedly lead, then there is a divide we can't cross."

For some in the community, the divide already has been narrowed by two sexual scandals involving prominent rabbis in the past year.

First, allegations surfaced that Rabbi Baruch Lanner, a top leader of an Orthodox youth group, harassed and molested teen-agers for more than 20 years. Though it has yet to be legally proven, the charge was backed up by a report commissioned by the Orthodox Union.

Next, a Reform Jewish leader, Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, resigned from the presidency of the Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion after being suspended for past sexual misconduct.

In addition, recent years have seen other local cases of misconduct involving rabbis, as well as clergy of other faiths.

Another silver lining could turn out to be an increased awareness of violence within the Jewish community, according to Susan Weidman Schneider, editor in chief of Lilith magazine. □

House supports school prayer

The U.S. House of Representatives supports public schools setting aside prayer time for students.

The resolution calls for schools to have "a sufficient period of time to allow children to pray for, or quietly reflect on behalf of, the Nation during this time of struggle against the forces of international terrorism."

The body passed the nonbinding resolution Thursday by a vote of 297-125.

Moments of silence are constitutional in the United States, but federal courts have mandated that the states not promote prayer in schools.

Jewish and civil liberties groups dismissed the House's action as unnecessary and an example of pandering to religious groups.

Jewish center for Moscow

A Jewish center was slated to open in Moscow.

The cultural center, expected to open Thursday evening, will operate in a mansion recently acquired by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in the city's downtown.

The center's goal is to enhance Jewish life and communal affiliation among Moscow Jewish intellectuals and other members of the city's middle class, according to Joel Golovensky, head of the JDC's Moscow office.

Sharpton sympathizes with Israel

"The people of Harlem stand in solidarity with victims of terror" in Israel, Rev. Al Sharpton said at a gathering in the historically black neighborhood of New York.

The controversial black leader recently returned from his first-ever visit to the Jewish state, which was controversial for an unscheduled meeting he held with Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat.

ADL presses Qatar on site

The Anti-Defamation League called on Qatar to disassociate itself from an anti-Semitic Web site. Among the site's postings is one accusing "Zionists" of responsibility for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and a few that espouse Holocaust denial.

The site is sponsored by a Qatari government ministry.

Shul photo exhibit opens

A new exhibit of photographs of synagogues in Venezuela and the Caribbean opened in Washington. The Venezuelan Embassy is hosting the show, which depicts modern and ancient synagogues and their artwork.

The exhibit traces the history of Jewish communities in Venezuela and neighboring Caribbean islands.

Needing Putin's support, Bush ready to repeal Jackson-Vanik

By Sharon Samber

WASHINGTON (JTA) — U.S. and Russian Jewish groups are pleased as a law that helped ensure the emigration of tens of thousands of Soviet Jews appears to be approaching its end.

Hosting Russian President Vladimir Putin this week, President Bush announced his intention to work with Congress to adjust the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, ending trade restrictions on Russia.

Russia has made "important strides on emigration and the protection of religious and ethnic minorities, including Russia's Jewish community," Bush said at a press conference Tuesday.

Adopted in 1974, the amendment made it a goal of U.S. foreign policy to persuade the Soviet Union to relax its restrictions on emigration. Sponsored by Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.) and Rep. Charles Vanik (D-Ohio), the amendment prohibited the extension of U.S. government credits and most-favored-nation trade status to any country with a "nonmarket economy" that didn't allow its citizens to emigrate freely.

The reasons for removing the restrictions now are twofold. Washington wants to hold together its fragile international coalition against the Taliban and Osama bin Laden's Al Qaida terrorist network, and is looking for something to offer Putin for his support. In addition, the White House wants to entice Russia to support Bush's missile defense program.

U.S. Jewish groups say they understand the reasoning, but want assurances that the Russian government will help its Jewish communities.

Many Russian Jewish groups take a slightly different line, urging the United States to lift the trade restrictions unconditionally.

Visiting the United States this week, one of Russia's chief rabbis said he is convinced that Putin is serious about fighting anti-Semitism at home, and intends to "eradicate it completely."

Rabbi Berel Lazar was one of a half-dozen Russian and American Jews who met with Putin Tuesday night at the Russian Embassy in Washington.

They reportedly were impressed by Putin's warmth and his resolve to help the Jewish community in Russia. Putin also spoke about his personal experience growing up near a Jewish family.

Before Rosh Hashanah this year, Putin sent a letter to the Jewish community promising to stamp out anti-Semitism in Russia. This week's meeting proved Putin's commitment to the well-being of Russian Jewry, fighting anti-Semitism and letting Russian Jews travel freely and retain their dual Russian-Israeli citizenship, Lazar said.

It is important to lift Jackson-Vanik so Russia can see that American attitudes also have changed, Lazar told JTA.

It also helps their relations with the surrounding society that Russian Jews are seen to support the change, Lazar said.

Since the collapse of the USSR, Russia has been granted normal trade relations every year through presidential waivers.

Under Jackson-Vanik, Russia's emigration policies must pass an annual review to receive such a waiver. The waivers have allowed Russian-American trade to continue unhindered over the past decade, but Russia resents the review process and wants normal trade relations to be permanent.

Since Jackson-Vanik is an amendment to trade legislation, a bill to change the legislation would have to originate in the U.S.

House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee, which has jurisdiction over trade agreements and revenue measures.

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) met with the U.S. national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, and plans to introduce legislation this year, spokesman Matt Gobush said, but Lantos doesn't believe it will acted upon until next year.

Lantos already has support from the committee chairman, its ranking member and other leading lawmakers, Gobush said.

"We've yet to see any resistance to the idea," he said.

Lantos has insisted on certain commitments, which could be included as "findings" in the legislation. They address the continuation of free Jewish emigration, enforcement of hate crimes legislation and restitution of Jewish communal property seized by the Soviets in the 1920s and 1930s.

Some members of Congress do not agree that Putin should be rewarded for the steps he has made to date. Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.) wrote a letter to the U.S. deputy secretary of state, Richard Armitage, expressing concern that anti-Semitism is still prevalent in Russia and that it is too early to change Jackson-Vanik.

Russia is providing assurances that it will not revert to its former repression, according to Harold Luks, chairman of NCSJ: Advocates on Behalf of Jews in Russia, Ukraine, the Baltic States and Eurasia. A recent exchange of letters between U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov on the importance of human rights and religious freedom is a positive step, Luks said.

Though he noted the different approaches of the American and Russian Jewish communities, Luks said the United States must be involved in ensuring the future of Jewish life in Russia.

"The Russian Jewish community is looking at 2001, and the American Jewish community is looking at 2001 and beyond," Luks said. "That's the reason for the assurances."

Others at the meeting with Putin were not pressing for such commitments.

"We don't need more assurances than the last two years," said Rabbi Levi Shemtov, director of the Washington office of American Friends of Lubavitch. He would be comfortable lifting Jackson-Vanik, Shemtov said, because of reports from Russia about how vastly the situation for Jews has improved.

"If someone's making a gesture and commitment, it should be answered with trust," Shemtov said. Jackson-Vanik no longer applies to Georgia and Kyrgyzstan. Belarus, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are unlikely to be considered for the step because of continued restrictions on emigration, some say.

Other former Soviet republics that might be freed from trade restrictions include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine.

The three Baltic nations were released from the Jackson-Vanik restrictions after the fall of communism in 1991. □

Pensions of Nazi suspects halted

BERLIN (JTA) — Germany is halting pension payments to 72 World War II veterans suspected of war crimes.

The move came after the Simon Wiesenthal Center presented Germany with lists of pensioners believed to have belonged to Nazi death squads. "Our information showed that these people violated the laws of humanity," said Efraim Zuroff, head of the Center's Jerusalem office. "We are correcting a historic injustice."

Another 11 pensions may be canceled in the coming weeks, Zuroff said. □